

Sell Your Art, *Your Way*

Be more you and escape to freedom

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The promise

In marketing we used to say “we know only half of our marketing works, we just don’t know which half”.

That’s no longer true.

But we get so easily tempted into spending time on marketing activity that doesn’t necessarily pay back, social media especially. “You have to post every day”. “You need to do video and post it on TikTok.” Then there are the art shows you don’t want to miss out on.

The problem is, and you know this already, when you post your work on social media, you’re making their platform more interesting. If it wasn’t for us there’d be no social media and no art shows.

The problem with social media accounts is, you don’t own it, and as societal pressure mounts for the providers to take responsibility for policing more extreme content, they don’t really want to employ people to make judgments so they automate it with Artificial Intelligence (AI), it is their strength after all, and that means your account can be shut down, temporarily or permanently, and there’s very little recourse.

And what happens if you build a big following on Instagram and then everyone moves to TikTok? (Forgive me if you’re reading this in 2027 when presumably some other platform is hot.)

How do you strike a balance between doing the art you want to do, exploring without boundary versus creating the art people want to buy?

This is what this book is about.

People connect with each other based on values.

In dating for example, if I like lounging on my sofa, and you love climbing mountains it’s going to be hard for us to connect, not least because we’ll never be in the same place :-)

It’s bigger than that, though. In that example, I want comfort and you want adventure.

We want different worlds.

This is so important, I call the whole thing values-based artist marketing.

With this book, you have the opportunity to get clarity on your values.

Then we’re going to consciously and (if your values allow it) muscularly apply your values to your marketing and your art.

I like to quote Spinal Tap and ask you to take your values and turn them up to eleven.

Let's imagine you are into adventure. If you **overtly** live for adventure, others who live for adventure too will understand you.

You'll attract likeminded people who want you to succeed.

You'll grow your own crowd of avid followers.

What if you could get 1,000 keen followers, do you think you might be able to make a living selling your art to them? "Yes" is the answer.

And then, would you *need* social media? No.

Life would be simpler. Make art. Email your fans every now and then. Sorted.

It comes down to embracing values-based marketing. A mailing list of 1,000 people who just like art in general, who are waiting to be persuaded, that's not the same thing at all.

So, the plan is:

1. Get clear on your values.
2. Live them and be more you, confidently and fully.
3. You'll naturally attract people who want you to succeed (and repel those who don't).
4. Collect and nurture them to sell your art.

Ideally, we'll evolve just be one way you sell your art.

(It's easier to optimise.)

Back in the day, Tupperware used to sell their food storage products through Tupperware parties. They optimised for that, spend nothing on advertising, and had a \$2.2bn turnover in 2017 (Wikipedia).

You don't have to do what everyone else is doing, you can sell your art in a way that aligns perfectly with your values so it feels natural and easy for you.

No more uncomfortable, slippery sales tactics.

One more thing before we get started.

I don't provide you with a proven marketing method where you have to follow all the steps exactly. Your top values will be uniquely yours, so your marketing message, your way of communicating and your marketing process will be as different as your art, perhaps more so.

It's for you to take values-based artist marketing and apply it to build your own marketing process.

So, what are values anyway?

Why values?

I've been around for a long time. I studied psychology, I've four decades of marketing experience getting into people's heads.

When you talk to a real expert and you ask "what advice would you give me" and they say "show up". For drummers it's "turn up on time, play a steady beat". After decades of experience something trumps all the detail. You have to live it to realise it, but ultimately there is something right at the top that matters more than everything else. It's the acme of all that expert's experience?

Live by your values

That's mine.

But, hey, who knows what 'values' are? I didn't, I had to look it up.

You probably aren't clear on your values either.

(Don't worry, we'll get to that.)

But for example, creativity. You're an artist, you obviously value creativity. You and all the other artists, but it does make you different from an accountant or greengrocer. But what makes you different from other artists, and why should anyone care?

Here's how deep this goes.

It's evolutionarily advantageous for humans to be able to judge someone quickly.

The oldest part of our brain is looking out for us at the most basic level and wants the answers to three things:

1. Is this food?
2. Is this a threat?
3. Can I have sex with it?

So when we meet someone new we make a best guess.

How?

From all the clues we have. How they are dressed. Their gender, their hair, their stance. Their accent and voice. Whether they seem confident or not. How they walk. Are they carrying anything or are they with anyone? What about eye contact? Backgrounds in Zoom.

If we discover where they are from, that's big. What are people from New York like? What are the French like? What about someone from Nigeria?

So now, if we decide this new person is thrifty, it affects what we do next. If we were trying to sell something, we may start with a lower priced offer. If we were dating, we might suggest a walk with home-made sandwiches rather than a fancy restaurant.

If someone is mindful, we might allow longer pauses in our conversation, and might ask how they feel or what they notice.

If they have zeal, we may raise the pace of our conversation and talk in terms of energy and capability and desire.

We *plan* our interactions based on our near-instant assessment of any new person.

Let's go deeper.

Why are we conscious? Why are we self-aware?

The evolutionary theory of consciousness says that, way back in our evolutionary history, perhaps before we were homo sapien, it was evolutionarily advantageous to us to quickly judge a new person. So, we evolved that ability.

That's big and complicated, but so what? So we need to be able to take action based on our judgment of the new person, so we need to be able to plan out scenarios. For example, if I do this, they'll do that, so I'll ...

If we are going to be able to hold in our head a model of this new person, if we are going to evolve that capability, the facility to think about another person as a discrete object and move them around in our imagination, we may as well model ourselves.

That's consciousness (says the theory).

Our brain is finite, remembering is hard (literally it depletes blood sugar so whether we are efficient or not is a matter of life or death). So we need some mnemonic short cuts: values.

Let's imagine some people: Janice is always up for a laugh. Brian never gives up, Helen is devout, Chris will do whatever it takes to get what he wants. Can you feel the desire to know what happens next when we put these people together?

Obviously there are other things that help us match with or decide to avoid other people. Their sense of humour perhaps. But values are the most important thing.

So the case for values being at the centre of everything is that:

- We already do it, automatically, all of the time
- It's easy because our brains evolved to do it
- You get to be yourself
- It attracts supporters and serious buyers and repels those who want something else out of life

- It bypasses intellect and analysis and plugs straight into feelings and hunches where buying decisions are really made

Let's get clear on *your* values

You can probably get behind most values. Maybe you are diligent, but also thrill seeking. Depends on the situation, right?

But some values matter more to you than others, and that's what I want you to discover in the next few minutes.

We might expect some app to be available to help with this, but no, I couldn't find one. My partner has a masters in psychology and nope, she didn't know of one either.

So I built it myself, and I'm giving you free access.

This really is unique.

Before I send you there, I want to be clear on two things.

First is this business about hierarchy of values. We might say we like a laugh and we're ambitious and we love art and so on, but some of our values are more important to us than others and when it matters, it's your top values that drive you.

So my software tool presents you with seven values and asks you to choose one. I'm helping you to reveal your most important values.

Don't overthink and agonise, if it feels right, that's what your subconscious is telling you so click it.

This values discovery process is in two parts. This step takes maybe ten to fifteen minutes so you may want to get comfortable with a coffee or similar before you start.

(Part two takes a little longer btw.)

The **second** thing is .. we all have different priorities for different scenarios. Fun when you're with the kids, serious and effective when presenting to the board, detailed and clear when talking to the doctor.

So it's important to take the exercise as you the artist, and keep reminding yourself of that because it's easy to get distracted.

As I say, the exercise is in two parts. In the first you get asked to make those choices. There are about 60 questions, so try to carve out some quiet time.

(If you get distracted or drop off the Internet or whatever, if you haven't blocked cookies and use the same device and browser, it should remember how far through you got so long as you don't leave it more than 24 hours.)

At the end of the first phase you'll be provided with a long list of your key values. Cut and paste them somewhere safe.

Then there's a video showing you how to group them together, that's step two.

It's really important, otherwise you just have a cloud of disparate values, but if you can group them together so it makes sense, that's the power of it, so don't neglect the second stage.

What you should end up with are blocks of similar values, with the number of values in each block indicative of how important it is to you.

Personally, I group values and then put them away and come back to it next day with a fresh head.

Do the exercise, and then come back to the book.

Here's my software tool: <https://johnallsopp.com>

What did you discover about yourself?

For me, running the values exercise gave me a really useful insight into myself that I had never before realised. I hope it's given you clarity about what you really stand for.¹

So here we go.

If, through the values exercise, you've got clarity on the values you think are most important .. what if you, with respect to Spinal Tap, turn it up to eleven?

No-one else has the values profile you have.

This is your unique source of differentiation.

¹ What I discovered about myself is .. I'm steady, reliable, trustworthy. That's what people see most days and that's their mental model of me.

But I also dream big (which is what you and I are about to do). That can come as a surprise, almost like I've been secretly harbouring something and not being truthful.

And so my frustration about people not 'getting' my big ideas is .. yes they are big and they may not want to do them .. but it's as much "what's got into John all of a sudden, I thought he was really safe and now he wants to destroy and rebuild".

Now I understand that, I can prepare for it.

You may paint a squirrel because it's cute. Another artist might paint exactly the same squirrel and the painting outcome is exactly the same but they did it to promote awareness of the environment.

This may take a while, you may need to come back to it, and I recommend doing the values exercise and this analysis and imagining every year, but here's your action plan:

Study and consider your big value blocks and imagine possible changes to either your art practice or how you market (or both) to bring you more closely into alignment with your true values.

There are two approaches you can take to this.

The revolutionary approach is to imagine the future you want. Presumably you want a world that has more of your key value in it. What would that look like? The more detail you add to your imaginary future, the better. As an artist, would it be reasonable to assume you can imagine bold, vivid images you can almost touch? (Not everyone has that ability.) The more vivid and 'real', the better. Write it down, describe it, paint it, collect images that support your vision on a mood board. Use it for motivation and clarity and do everything you can to live your goal.

Here's a thought.

Do you think Beyoncé sees the world differently to you?

She has the bigger picture, because she's a long way forward in her journey. You can't see what she sees unless you're in her shoes.

The reason I mention that is .. you can't see your future. You don't know what's around the corner. So, if you are the revolutionary type, and if you can imagine your amazing future that aligns with your newly clarified values, fantastic. Just be aware that your vision needs maintenance because as you get closer to it, new opportunities and threats come into view. So again, diarise to do this exercise .. I would say once a year.

The evolutionary approach is to work on what you can do today or this week or this month that takes you closer to living your life according to your most important values. You make steady progress and never stop. Continual improvement.

If you're more evolutionary, just identify a step you can take today that moves you more towards your values. Then do it again .. schedule some quiet time to think or journal about it once a week or month, whatever you feel comfortable with. This is fun discovery, not a burden.

Either is good, I'm more evolutionary, personally, but go with what works for you.

Let me emphasise, the value profile you've identified, that's you.

Living more closely with your values is being more you. That's what I meant about turning it up to eleven. More you. More clear, more determined, more certain about your direction, positive about what matters to you. Able to say no to things that don't match what matters to you.

This is such an important step that I want to add this. I saw how an artist arranged their groupings and it didn't spark anything in me. With their permission, I rearranged them and a massive future direction formed. At this point, I don't know if I arranged them according to my biases and prejudices and experience and that's why it suddenly mattered to me. I don't know if I moved that artist from their interpretation which they were happy with. I think, they were a little stuck with the groupings and that's why they came to me.

My point is, if you're not feeling it, see if a trusted friend could work with you on grouping the values in your long list, see if you end up grouping things differently and what they see in it for you.

Everything else flows from this, so it's worth doing it well and ideally, complete this exercise before moving on with the book.

What's your mode?

Besides identifying the values you stand for, we need to consider your mode.

One way of looking at this is whether you think you are visually led, aurally led, or kinesthetically led.

As a visual artist, it's quite likely you are visually led, and your buyers also.

Personally, I'm aurally led. I wish I were better at graphic design, I love it but I struggle to do it. I like hugs and do reach out to touch people if I feel connected. But the truth is, I'm in a band, I enjoy music, I listen .. I'm aurally led.

Kinesthetically led people are about the body and its position, stance, and how it moves, and how things feel to the touch.

You might get clues to your favourite mode if you notice how you habitually sign off with people. 'Speak later' .. that's aural. 'Catch you later', kinesthetic. 'See you soon', visual.

Do you prefer phone calls or text chat or video conferencing?

What sort of things are you comfortable with posting online and where do you become uncomfortable? Many artists I speak with are uncomfortable with video.

So we have a choice.

We could take the view that you will do your best work, be more persuasive, be more you, if you stay in the mode in which you feel most comfortable (probably visual). That makes total sense especially if we consider that buyers of visual art are likely to be visually led too. So you end up mainly on Instagram and Pinterest.

My only issue with that is it doesn't make you stand out among other artists who are doing the same thing.

Back in my younger days I was terrified of public speaking. I dropped out of university the first time around because I joined a management subsidiary class and they wanted us to do presentations. I couldn't even speak to a room of four colleagues. I would literally shake and drip with sweat, my clothes gradually soaking and my A4 notes shaking.

A decade or so later I took a cheap, local authority funded class on speaking, run by someone I knew, and I had a "is that it?" moment, and from then on I've enjoyed it. No nerves, nothing.

And in preparation to present a podcast for a local company, I started voice and singing lessons.

My point is, if fear or lack of skill are holding you back, that can be fixed. The question is .. would you like to be the person who does that? Would you like to be good at presenting video? If so, make your moves. Of course if you don't want to, if it's not where you're going, don't do it but don't let fear and trepidation get in the way of you being what you want to be. Fear is a liar.

The other thing is Blue Ocean Strategy, a book that encourages businesses to not follow the pack and to develop their own unique offering no-one can compete with. (The red ocean is the high competition, shark infested waters of the regular market.)

The great thing about being values led is it can lead you to a blue ocean where you are the outstanding and obvious person to go to for whatever it is you do, where direct competition is light or non-existent and you can live your best life.

As I said before, my experience has been that many artists don't like making videos, so that's an opportunity for those who do. If you would like to get good at it, you could be the amazing artist on TikTok or YouTube as part of you finding a space where competition is light.

Your values can and probably should lead to your mode.

If you value knowledge, you might need some text space and someone willing to learn so LinkedIn articles might be your place.

If ecstasy is your key value, video would seem to be the way forward.

If introversion is your main value then possibly still images of your work are your mode.

If you are defined by intrepidity, perhaps you'll be right up front with the latest social media trends and dare to do audio, video, stills, live, whatever it takes.

See how it all fits together?

Core principles

Stepping stones and what you see

Imagine you are balancing on stepping stones to cross a beautiful, curving river.

When you take your first step onto the first stone, all you can see is your bit of river, the trees on the other bank, the shallows where you are. You may not even be able to see where the stepping stones take you.

When you take the next step you get to see a little bit more of what's around the corner. As you take each step, more of your environment is revealed, you see further along the river in both directions, you see a waterfall you could only hear before, and there's a tributary with leaping trout and a kingfisher on a branch.

You didn't know they were there when you started. They revealed themselves to you as you took further steps along the path.

It's said that we overestimate what we can do in a week, but underestimate what we can do in a decade.

So if I were to ask you to dream big and design your future self in ten years, what would you say?

I don't know why but everyone who runs this exercise seems to want to know what car you'll be driving, I guess it's a concretisation. How much money will you earn? Same. But for an artist those might be nice but what about your studio? How much time will you spend on art versus other things? How will you be selling your work?

But also the minutiae. What time would you arise and what would be your morning routine? How much time would you spend in your studio? What would be your weekly routine, would you have a day or the weekend off? Or work the weekend and have your time when things are quiet?

If money was no object, what sort of art would you create?

That's one way to go, but I struggle with this. I mention this in case you do too. Maybe the standard way of motivating yourself where you cut out a picture of the car you'll drive and stick it to your wall and dream about it every day doesn't work for you.

Maybe you're trying to escape such goal-oriented consumerism, maybe that's why you're an artist in the first place.

The world looks like it does from where you are. It's obviously hard to imagine the hidden things (that you don't know about yet) that will be revealed once you are further along your journey. So it's hard to build a motivating and trustworthy vision of your future if you don't know what opportunities will reveal themselves.

In that case, an evolutionary change model might be more your thing. Steady but relentless. You know your core values now, so just always advocate for them.

Here are some practical ideas for you if you struggle to imagine a believable future for yourself.

- When an opportunity arises, train yourself into the habit of checking it against your values. If it fits, great. If not, say no.
- Schedule a regular review of whether you are spending your time on things that are consistent with your values. Ditch things that are not aligned.
- Schedule a regular imagination session where you come up with new ideas of how to live more by your values. If you don't have techniques, I'd buy almost any De Bono book but one quick technique that I like is to get a random word (online (<https://randomwordgenerator.com/>) or just open a dictionary) and wonder what that says about you, your values and your practice. Most of the time you'll come up with a new angle or idea. I just tried it, 'eavesdrop' suggests I should hang around in artists' forums to discover their hottest concerns. 'Doctor' suggests I could diagnose and cure artists' marketing issues 1-1 rather than as a teacher to many.
- Start journaling about your day and your values, see where the opportunities lie and what you could improve. Tiny steps make a journey.

A way to attract likeminds

Why do people wear brand logos? Because there's something that the brand stands for that they also stand for. I passed a guy the other day wearing a t-shirt saying 'California'. It tells us something about what he likes, what he stands for.

So here we are. 8 billion people on a rock, each of us wanting something. More fun, perhaps. Love. Peace. Something exciting to happen. Revolution. To travel. More friends. A distraction. More beauty.

We carry our wants and needs around like joeys, always there, always wanting attention, and when our brain spots something that might help, it brings our focus to it.

So if you stand for fun, someone who wants fun is more likely to spot you. The more overt you are, the more different you are from 'normal', the more that happens.

The person wanting adventure probably won't spot you, they'll be distracted by something else. Good. Your image is a cleaver, a fork in the road, you only want the right people.

Also, if you stand for fun, you'll spot others who want the same thing.

But attracting likeminds isn't just about attracting buyers and repelling tyre kickers.

What if you stand for fun and you find an accordion player who also stands for fun, and a poet, and a sculptor? You share common cause. You are on the same journey. You 'get' each other. You can help each other.

What if you put on a show together? You all stand for fun, so your marketing can be efficient, and when the person walks in the door their feeling could be .. "I'm home, where have you people been all my life?" "This is what I've been looking for."

(I like to bring in aromatherapy at this point. I love the idea that you might get yourself an aromatherapist who would mix up an aroma to reflect your next show. Visitors would not only arrive and see your exhibition space, hear the music you've selected, but also be hit by a complimentary scent. If you shake their hand and hand them a glass of wine or hors d'oeuvre you've essentially entered them by every possible route.)

Between you and your fellow travellers, you can build a crowd where everyone is wanting the same thing and you buoy each other up, raise your hope that there can be a world that is more like what you all want.

With collaborators, because it's not just you, it feels more enveloping, more like a movement, bigger and more persuasive, something to be part of, something to watch.

Having identified the values you most want to live by, and then giving yourself permission to live by them more than you have been, you'll make yourself and your art more attractive to those who agree with you and want the same thing.

Many hands make light work, so your vision of a better world becomes more possible.

And the more you do it, the more you turn it up, the more your beacon shines.

I mentioned before the blue ocean idea. It comes from a book called [Blue Ocean Strategy](#) (affiliate link) and the crux of it is this.

You could head for where the demand is. But everyone's doing that. Competition is fierce. Margins are low.

Whereas, if you can create something new, you'll be in a market of your own making and that's an easier life.

My add-on to Blue Ocean Strategy is the values exercise. By being more you, you can create your own space and so long as you base it around values, it can include other likeminded people. You can go further together.

Of course, these groups of likeminded people are likely to exist already. Do people who want more fun go to comedy clubs? You can join in with existing groups and likely be the only artist. You can advertise to members. And there are many more groups to discover (don't limit yourself to just one).

To me this seems like a better bet than trying to sell at an art fair along with 100 other artists all vying for a relatively random buyer's attention.

Choice and closeness

Create levels in your marketing so people can choose how close to you they want to be.

Most people in the world won't be interested at all, that's fine.

Don't be scared of repelling the people you don't want. If you stand for fun, you don't want misery guts people turning up and 'not getting it' and spoiling the mood.

You can design the steps in whatever way makes you feel good, but for example, if you put out a blog post and people read it, that's a small level of commitment on their part. Seriously if you reach someone you want to reach, your headline gets them curious and they read your blog or watch your video .. that's a great job, well done.

Having come to the end of your thing, what can they do if they decide they want more of you in their life? Usually, they'll follow you somehow. They will have a preferred social media platform, the one they use the most, so they may let you in to their future by following you there.

It's not much of a commitment from them, because they can always unfollow you and anyway the algorithm will decide whether they are really interested or not. The way to see it is they've given you permission to pop up later in their lives.

A deeper commitment might be to sign up to your mailing list. That gets you into their inbox which is pretty important, so this shows trust and a fairly high level of desire to get to know you. They may follow you on social media for a while until you give them a reason to move closer and join your list, or they may jump straight in.

A higher level of commitment could be when they buy something small .. cards or a badge for instance. Or they may spend their time and transport costs to turn up to one of your shows.

Above that is being invited to your preview and actually showing up.

Higher still is buying one of your works.

It doesn't stop there, they can become a collector and buy multiple works.

Now, we're not forcing anyone to do anything, we're just providing different levels for them to sit at.

Two things follow from this.

The **first** is to work out ways to differentiate your social media posts from your mailing list posts so you don't give away everything to social media. There should be a reason to join your mailing list, you should provide more value there.

For instance (and I recommend this) you might invite people on your mailing list to your previews. On social media you might say that you have a show and you want them to attend etc., but you could also say on a Wednesday that you will be giving away limited preview tickets to people on your mailing list on Friday, let's say, so join here. It gives them a reason to make the jump.

But generally you might post more often to your mailing list, and perhaps more intimately .. your thoughts and reasons for doing what you're doing.

You might ask questions on your mailing list. Quite common is getting help on naming a piece of art. Or you might ask for direction if you are pondering a choice. Asking your mailing list for their favourite poet, for instance, might elicit someone who you could partner with.

The **second** thing is to consider that moving someone from one stage to a closer one is a sale. Moving someone from social media to your mailing list, let's think of that as a sale because you've provided them with a value proposition and they've taken it.

So by the time you have someone in front of you at a show, they've already said yes many times, they are presold. They already want to buy. It takes a lot of the stress off that feeling of having to be 'salesy'.

It means having something happening at each level to provide for those people and their comfort level, but also every now and then doing something that motivates them to move up a level. So you have a way to get people's attention who have never heard of you. You have a programme for social media. A programme for your mailing list. And of course you have your events and art sales programmes.

If you are inclined, you might measure the success of your marketing .. well of course you will tot up art sales, but another measure might be how many people are on your mailing list. Later I'll talk about how to ensure that list is clean (we automatically remove those who have disengaged), so it's always a hot list of keenly interested people. Only then is 'how many people' really worth counting.

The sale and the aftersale

Just because someone has bought something doesn't mean that's the end of their journey towards their closeness with you.

When someone has bought from you, assuming everything went well, they know you, they like you and they trust you.

If it feels right, you could ask them to send you a photograph of your artwork in place. If they say something nice about the whole thing that you can publish and use as a testimonial .. brilliant, especially if they are in the photograph.

There is a downside to that. It's the psychology of reciprocation. If you ask for a testimonial and they have to get off the sofa and brush their hair and get their iPhone to work and agonise over what to say and send it to you and suffer the ignominy of appearing with a bunch of other cheesy goons on your website, they may get to feeling that you owe them.

Or, you know, maybe I have a bad attitude to it. Maybe they'd feel proud to display their good taste in public with likeminded people.

It's something you'll have to judge, but ideally we want our clients to feel they owe us. You serve so well and give so much, maybe you give them a box of chocolates when you deliver it, some gesture that leaves them feeling like they owe you. That drives good freestyle comments and favours and shares and photographs and so on.

That's just one possibility but there should be a new, permanent level that buyers reach, and my favourite idea is this.

For your next show, create a catalogue and send it to them a few days before the preview. Of course they are invited to the preview, but as previous buyers they get to choose and buy before the preview, from the catalogue. They get first pick, and your preview opens with red dots already in place.

The key is to provide some real opportunities for proven buyers to get closer

To that end, here's my favourite mad idea.

Throw an annual party for your buyers.

It could be one night and develop over the years, but I imagined it as a Monday to Friday break where they come and stay at a local B&B or hotel or whatever they fancy and you have events over the week .. I don't think of it as intensive, maybe just a few meetups, with

space for people to relax and do their own thing. Depends on your values, if people want intensive then go that way.

Perhaps at the start, middle and end in the evenings, you provide food and a party atmosphere at yours, with all the collaborating musicians, aromatherapists and others on your journey we sorted out in a previous chapter.

I imagined you'd start a painting at the beginning of the week, and have it finished and for sale at the end.

Landscape artists particularly have places that inspire them, so take your group out for a walk.

Have you come across the idea of a BarCamp? You could, say, midweek, set up an opportunity for people to speak on your most important value. A BarCamp is a conference where the speaking events are organised on a whiteboard in the first five minutes of the conference. Every attendee is encouraged to present, and everyone writes their name and their presentation title in a slot and room and that's the conference organised. Yours may be smaller so organised more like a musician's open mic night.

I would have it as a paid for thing so you can provide professional catering/pizza, whatever, a cleaner to tidy up afterwards and so on, a bar, photographer, videographer and you can relax knowing everything's taken care of and so you can push the boat out without worrying about your bank balance. If you're relaxed and present, people can get to know you. Perhaps obviously I would also have some paintings around with prices so people can buy.

Punk idea: If it were me, I'd burn the art that hasn't sold in the year. Ritually. Live on camera, KLF style. Let people rescue them by buying them. This particular idea has not been universally embraced, but don't let that poison your feelings towards having a soiree.

By the time you've painted and sold the 'live' painting and people have bought something off the wall and rescued something from the flames you could easily be a few thousand pounds up and a few friends richer.

The point, anyway, is to get closer to your buyers. Start small and build it up and of course the nature of the event depends on your values. Gather people who have the same values so you can all recognise your power and your dreams and your shared journey.

There is another level after someone turns from being a buyer to a repeat buyer. It's advocate. They'll stand up for you.

The idea of the party is to network and see what opportunities come up. Give your buyers the opportunity to give you a helping hand. A contact. A show.

It's not the end of the journey when someone has bought something. It's just the start.

Pricing

One of my first ever clients when I came to Scarborough was an antique dealer, and I had the idea of taking every item in their shop that hadn't sold and slowly dropping the price online until someone buys it. He said no. Quite rightly. Pointing to an old, decorated transportation box packed with tobacco leaves he said "someone will want that and they'll pay the price, low or high, it just needs that one person".

By the time you've attracted the attention of someone and persuaded them to read your article or peruse your artwork, to follow you on social media, to join your mailing list and to come to your show .. they've already said yes many times to you. Whether the painting they want is £800 or £1,200 is probably not a showstopper for them.

Finding that person and nurturing them into becoming a buyer takes time, effort and budget.

Do you think Mr Kipling pays for the marketing of his Exceedingly Good Cakes out of his own wallet? Of course not, you pay for his marketing when you buy his cakes. So your client pays for the marketing that got them stood in front of you when they buy your art the same way they buy your art materials.

I'm not saying your buyers should pay for marketing adventures that aren't working, that could add infinite cost. A rule of thumb is that 10-15% your turnover is about right for an effective marketing budget.

Also, an artwork is worth what you say it's worth. I stood in an art gallery looking at two similar sized large paintings, one priced £500 the other £8,000. I couldn't discern the reason for the difference while stood there. The price is what you say it is. The term for this is price elasticity, and art is very price elastic. You could put your prices up and whereas for an everyday object that would quench demand, if you raise the price of your art it might denote status to the buyer. Art is not normal. Demand might go up if you raise your prices.

When considering your price, you'll tell yourself a lot of stories. Maybe you should price yourself compared to others you consider your equal. What will your repeat buyers think? Maybe the economic climate isn't right for you to put your prices up. Maybe you're not good enough to sell at that level? Perhaps you want your art to be accessible to all sorts of people. Maybe you are a community artist where pricing can exclude people who you are working to include.

All of that will always be there. So you really have to decide whether you're going to carry on as you are (which is probably fine if you're happy ... but you're the one reading this book), or step up.

We are back to your vision of your future. Perhaps you step forward by changing your prices.

The Rockstar Lifecycle

If you're an artist, and you paint paintings and you create one every week and you share it on social media .. it messes with buying motivations.

If I buy one of your paintings, who's to say next week's one won't be better? Why don't I delay my purchase? It doesn't really matter, there's always another painting.

Back in the day, the big rock bands would go in the studio to record an album, release it, promote it and tour and then rest. This is relevant to the visual artist because embedded in it is some strong persuasive psychology so your sales may well increase without you having to be salesy.

So let's investigate. Let me start by saying that not all of this may suit you. If I get any resistance, it's mostly about this. Do what you want, I'm just suggesting this as a way to increase your sales and give yourself a perhaps healthier, less stressful lifestyle without you having to sell harder.

Let's think of your next exhibition as your next album.

First of all, I propose that your exhibition is of your latest paintings and they are connected by a theme.

Prior to the exhibition you are of course in your studio making the art. I propose that you disappear from public view during that time and concentrate on making the best art you can.

You can tell your people that's what you're doing. "I'm going into the studio for 2 months and I'm not answering emails, see you on the other side."

People want what they can't have. My partner decided that the crunchy white stalks of lettuce were giving her digestive gyp. I've never wanted lettuce more in my life. Oooh the fresh crunchiness. Drove me bonkers.

Going into the studio and saying "you can't have me", that's going to increase desire.

This is the time you always wanted, undisturbed studio time. Enjoy it.

As you come to the end of that, you've finished your collection and you start to think about the practicalities of your exhibition, it's a different part of your brain that needs to be engaged. Now, you're talking to people, to the press, on social media, you're talking about your collection. What's different about this work and why?

Rather than trying to find something to say about each artwork as it comes out, you're building a story around the whole collection.

You haven't revealed each work and tried to explain it. Here you are talking about the whole collection and the reasons behind the direction you are on .. so you have more time to go deep.

I wouldn't publish all your work at this point, just some key paintings or even just one, the headline image for the show.

I've talked before about creating a catalogue so your previous buyers get first pick, send that off a couple of days before the preview. Before that, of course, send your preview invitations to your mailing list. Then it's the preview and the exhibition. Keep pushing and promoting and talking about it up to the last day because .. when it's gone it's gone. Deadlines are motivating.

The point of a collection is it is bounded and finite. It's limited by start and finish dates, and this collection only exists here. Next exhibition will be new work. Different work. Let's say this time all you painted was rabbits. Last time, it was donkeys. Next it could be llamas, who knows? But for someone who is into rabbits, now is the time because you may never paint rabbits again. Plus, they are selling, see the red dots? Scarcity. Urgency.

It also marks progress. Remember when you painted cats? How long ago was that? What a journey you've been on, look at the progress in your technique but also your growth as an artist. It's not just more of the same, and for your repeat buyers, there's a motivation to buy something from every exhibition .. if they want to really collect you.

And because all you've done this time is paint rabbits, you've got really deep into them, you're really good at painting them, you've seen things in your 20th rabbit painting that you never noticed before and you bring that to us. You're really good at it.

So then the exhibition closes, you do all the admin around that and you're on to the most important part. You stop. You rest.

Take a holiday. Really. Go away somewhere. Don't paint. Do nothing.

For me, this last stage is the most important. It's really crucial that your experience has time to sink in, and your subconscious has room to consider and to come back to speak to you. The idea in the shower. The oh wow moment when something gets mentioned and it all clicks together.

The other thing about rest is .. we work for ourselves and holidays are doubly expensive for us. Normal people still get paid while they are on holiday. We pay for the holiday, but we also are not in the studio making stuff to sell, nor are we selling. So a £1,000 break for a regular person becomes £2,000 for us if we usually make £1,000 worth of art. What I'm saying is if you don't have the financial room to take a holiday, your prices and your marketing system are not working well enough. Holidays and breaks are important for your artistic development and your mental health.

After a while, inspiration will strike and you'll want to paint again. That's the start of your next collection and the cycle starts again.

It's inefficient and tiring to swap between tasks and making art and speaking to people are very, very different things. You'll get more done and do better work if you concentrate on the studio when you need to and then although you may not be as comfortable with people, if you dive into it fully and concentrate on it for big chunks of time, you'll get good at that too. Trying to do both is hard work, so don't.

If you deny people, so they can't have whatever they want whenever they want it, increases desire and makes you powerful.

The finite nature of an exhibition .. there are only so many paintings, when they are sold, they are gone. The exhibition starts on a date and ends a week or two later, and then it's gone. Scarcity is motivating.

If you haven't got an exhibition, you can create it all on your website, just don't put it up and leave it up, use all the tools exactly the same way to create urgency and need.

Getting people to respect your timeline and you as an artist increases your power.

Having the time and opportunity to talk about your whole collection in a deep and meaningful way rather than trying to justify each single painting, that increases your status.

The Wave

The Wave is an approach to social media that takes advantage of the timing and urgency around your exhibitions and the Rockstar Lifecycle.

Perhaps what most artists do is tell people about your exhibition and ask them to come along. Of course that's better than nothing but you can improve your attendance figures and art sales by tailoring your social media and mailing list and advertising messages according to how imminent is the exhibition.

The obvious activity to promote your exhibition is to spend the week of your preview focussed on getting people to turn up.

If that comes out of the blue, fewer people will be persuaded. So let's back up a couple of months and warm them up.

I'll take as an example an artist who stands for human warmth and connection.

- Let's say 8-6 weeks before your exhibition, you start to frame the problem that you solve, there's not enough warmth around. You can just talk about that, the problem you are working to solve. What's wrong? What do you see that needs fixing? What

would you prefer? Can you get into a discussion about the problem (without jumping to “I can solve it”)?

- 5-3 weeks before, start framing yourself as a solution. You’ve been working on this, it’s your purpose.
- 2 weeks to opening, you can talk about your exhibition and how your art and this shared concern and purpose all relate, so that buying one of your paintings becomes a mark of how committed they are, it’s part of the solution, part of their journey.
- Then you meet them and they walk out with a bigger purchase than 'just' a painting, they’ve bought a whole worldview.

A useful creative framework is Why/What/How/Whatif.

- You could write about Why Human Warmth Is Important. (I’m not, by the way, suggesting these are your titles. These are simply topics.)
- You might write about What can be done to increase human warmth.
- There's How do I help improve/increase warmth?
- And finally let's dream a little: What would things be like if we really solved the problem of the lack of interpersonal warmth?

That's the groundwork, let's create a plan .. it's big piece of paper time.

Take your next exhibition, and track back 8 weeks, mark out 8-6 weeks, then 5-3 weeks, then 2 weeks through to the show's closing date.

Think about your work and your values and choose a few values that your present work really speaks to, write those on your sheet.

So in weeks 8-6 develop some ideas for **why** your value is important. You can develop the idea over the period or alternatively 3 weeks is perfect for a multipart story that illustrates why this is so important to you.

What sort of world do we want? There's usually something in the news that resonates with you because of your values, it's good to use a news story to bring your values to life and show they have real and current application.

Having developed the reasons why your values are important, you can then spend weeks 5-3 talking about those values in your art. We're moving away from why and on to what can be done, and how you help.

This moves you away from talking about your paintings. We're talking about a life's purpose that the reader by this point will share (those who don't will have already wandered off).

So, **how** did you come to believe this value was key above all else? What moments in your life were pivotal? And how does this come out in themes in your work? What's so different about this new body of work compared to your past work, with respect to your values? Did you learn something about what you stand for since your last show?

From 2 weeks in (obviously if it's a bigger, ticketed, show you'd be selling tickets way earlier, but for a regular exhibition this probably works) mix up your call to action with posts about how the reader will feel as an owner of one of your works, how will they change once they've made this investment in their future?

One possible call to action is for people to join your mailing list. Remember also I suggest in the Rockstar Lifecycle chapter that anyone who has bought one of your works could be sent a catalogue a day or two before your preview, with the option to buy before the doors even open.

This is a good place for your dream post about the sort of world you would like to see. **What if** you succeeded in creating a world which holds your values as highly as you do. What would that be like?

Now the problem is, most artists will be trying to finish the art in this period too, so try to get as much prepared ahead of time as possible, you can probably schedule out a lot of the actual posting.

The last part needs to continue after your preview too of course, the closing of the exhibition is the 'last chance to buy' so reserve some energy for that.

And that's why I suggest a rest is good afterwards.

If this all seems like a lot or writing isn't really your thing, you could find someone to help.

It's a wave, it rolls towards you, it crashes over you, and there's the calm afterwards.

From a user point of view, this is wildly different to "I dun another painting". It's a narrative journey they'll feel and it carries with it the urgency of time: this is happening now, and if you miss it, it'll be gone forever.

The practical stuff

In this section we're going to move on from high theory to look at the main digital marketing tools and the principles of how to use them.

I'm not going to provide a click-by-click guide showing you exactly what to do to get set up because these services are constantly being improved and five minutes after I wrote it, any screenshots and so on would be out of date.

Once you have the principles in place, however, you'll know what you are aiming for and how it fits into your system so that you can set things up in the right way.

Your mailing list

I mentioned earlier that the people on your mailing list are more committed to you than your social media followers, so your emails should have a more intimate style, more like you are writing to a friend. Try to work out a way to provide more value to those on your list than those who only follow you on social media.

Plus, your mailing list contains at least two groups of people: people who have bought from you and those who haven't yet.

You can and probably should do that with tags (most people use Mailchimp for their mailing list, I'm not a huge fan but that's probably what you've already got). So if you're not already set up this way, create a tag (say, 'buyer' or 'client'). Now, if you sell, say, postcards and someone on your list has spent £5 on a pack of postcards, you might want to differentiate between those and the clients who have bought a painting. I suggest creating a tag 'buyer' for everyone who's given you money, and maybe 'paintingBuyer' for anyone who's bought an original painting. Then tag everyone in your list who's bought, and then make sure everyone who has bought is on there and tagged. To be clear, in this scheme someone who bought a painting would be tagged with paintingBuyer and with buyer.

Now you can write to buyers, paintingBuyers and yet-to-buyers at will. Great.

When you have shows coming up, you can send out messages according to the timing of The Wave, living your values and using your mode (all of that was discussed in previous chapters).

When you send an email to a hundred or a thousand people, Yahoo!, Gmail and the rest .. these are hugely powerful pieces of artificial intelligence and they spot what you're doing. Think of Google as God, there's no hiding. So it sees you sending out the same thing to multiple addresses and concludes "this is a mailshot". Alright, next question .. "is it something people want?" So it watches the open rate and the responses of those who open your email. If a low percentage of the first people to see your email open it, all your emails will go in the spam folder and it'll remember you as a low quality provider until you prove otherwise.

If a high percentage of people open it and interact, you have a chance of getting into people's mailbox.

So:

- Write a super duper subject line
- Write fabulous preview text
- Include at least one link people can click (that's interaction)
- Ask for a response (another interaction)
- Be clear they can unsubscribe if they like

More than anything, be useful to them. I know it's normal to write and say .. I would do the same for a Skandals gig .. we're playing a gig at this venue on this date. You'll be writing to say you've a show and that is useful for sure. But with Skandals I try to say, basically, you'll

be happier if you come spend a couple of hours with us. I don't labour that, one of our keyphrases is 'skank yourself happy with us' (skanking is the ska dance). So that's about them, not about me. I'll get paid whether they come along or not, I'm just saying it's a great, feel good night and the benefit of them coming along is their own enjoyment. You're writing about them and what they get out of it, not about you.

What you're aiming for is a bubbling hot list of people who yearn for what you're going to do next. I'll talk about that a little more later.

Mailing lists used to be about size, but with these interaction measures, the goal is now hotness. Basically, when someone cools off and stops opening your emails, you want them off your list lest they bring your open rate below some threshold and ruin the whole thing.

Mailchimp provides you with an engagement score for everyone on your list. I don't use Mailchimp, I use AutoPilot instead, and from memory I've automated it so that people get a +1 for opening an email, and a +5 for an interaction, and then after 60 days I -1 and -5 them. So if they don't interact for 60 days, they're back to zero. That's on a mailing list where I email every Monday.

They're still on my list at this point, but then I have a quarterly shakeout and everyone below an engagement score threshold gets tagged or moved to another list so I don't email them the regular stuff.

I may send out one email about a show to these people, and those who open/interact might get back in, but then the rest can go elsewhere. If I were running a big setup, they'd go to another mailing list provider where I'd try to get them to re-sign in. But basically, we want no-shows off the list, however you do it. Mailchimp automatically provides an engagement score for each email address I believe so much of that may be automated.

Back to the idea of this being a hotlist. If you have maybe 200 people on your list, and you email them about a show and you sell maybe a £1,000 painting to one of those people, then you might decide that mailings make you £5 per person. Or (better) to look at it over a year and say over a year you sold two such paintings, then each person on your hotlist is worth £10 per year.

So if you need to make £10k from your mailing list, then you need 1,000 people on it. If you can get better at your email list management and get £20 from each one on average per year, then you only need 500 hot fans.

This is how you can escape the media, break free of social media and even flee the galleries. You just need yourself and sufficient hot fans and you're free.

Ads

Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising has been revolutionary. One time, I placed an ad in the front of a monthly business magazine for £1,000. Got no enquiries, nothing. So that was the old way.

Crazy as it may seem, there was a time when people wondered how Google would make money providing this free search engine of theirs. Of course there was also a time before social media.

Currently there are two main types of PPC ads.

Google (and others) provide keyword-targeted ad opportunities on their search engines and other facilities (Google owns YouTube, for instance). If someone types in “oil painting of a spitfire for sale” then if that’s your thing, you can connect with someone right in the moment when they are looking for what you do.

Advertising can’t get more beautifully targeted than that, but it’s not my focus at the moment.

The other type is offered by for instance Facebook/Instagram (and others) where you used to target people by their interest, but increasingly you hand things over to Facebook’s AI (Artificial Intelligence) which finds prospects for you based on the data the company holds, which may include things like whether this person or that one buys things online.

One of the key points about this new world is .. you pay by results. So whereas that failed magazine ad of mine cost me my money regardless of the results I got, nowadays you can pay per click to your website, for instance, or even better, pay for each mailing list signup or sale or enquiry. So you know you’re going to get results for your investment.

Letting Facebook’s AI do the work has made things simpler. We don’t have to stress so much about targeting. I’ve even seen an ad without any targeting at all (ie. advertised to the whole world) outperform one that’s targeted to what we think should work.

The reason is that the software has access to a lot more information than we can handle. It knows who is in a buying mood, for instance. So to say “show my ad to anyone, but I only want to pay for sales” lets the AI software seek out people it thinks are hot prospects.

Advertising to the whole world is an extreme case, I’m not recommending that. But I am saying the AI performs better with a bigger group of people to target, and so getting tight on your targets may nowadays be counterproductive.

Another possibility: if you’ve sold a few hundred artworks, you can upload your client emails to Facebook and it will find others with a similar profile for you to advertise to. How about that?

If you’ve set it up, Facebook knows who’s visited your website. Retargeting those people is currently providing my lowest cost leads for my next Challenge week. You could advertise your next exhibition similarly.

If we want to build one simple system that sells your art for you, PPC ads are a really strong contender.

A two-stage ad process could find you new prospects who look at your website, and then retarget them to get them onto your mailing list where you can invite them to come to your shows and/or buy online. That might be all you have to do to create a sustainable practice. And if it costs £100 to make a sale, just add it to your prices and hey .. headache free marketing that takes very little of your time, improves with age and costs you nothing.

Your website and SEO

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process of getting your rightful position in search and being discoverable.

For a start, there are many search platforms not just Google and not just search engines. YouTube and TikTok, for instance. Discussion forums too. But let's just talk Google for simplicity.

Sales and marketing is its own worst enemy sometimes. Google and businesses are in a constant battle. Google wants to provide the best possible search results for any query, worldwide. Its ad revenue depends on it.

To do that, it has to deal with spam. I remember the days when people were selling software to create massive hierarchies of nonsense pages in order to point their traffic and PageRank upwards towards a page they actually did want to appear in search. Spinning software was rife so that people could write/espouse/present/deliver a core document containing alternative words like that, and the software could output a hundred different versions of the same article for use in multiple places to gain readers and inbound links. It's going to get worse with AI-written content.

Google realised it had created a system that encouraged people to pollute the web with low quality pages and changed its algorithm to rend those pages low.

The company doesn't publish how it determines which pages appear on page one of search, so there's a whole industry out to divine what those rules might be. They provide advice about how long a page should be, what should be the keyword density of your copy and so on.

I think that ship has sailed.

The Google ranking system is run by AI (artificial intelligence). It changes by the nanosecond.

So let's get back to first principles. Google wants to give real human users their best possible experience when they search the Internet. Otherwise, people will move to another search engine, and Google's revenue will fall.

It knows .. and this is really important .. it knows when people click on the first result, come back after 15 seconds, click on the second result and disappear. What's that say? Option 2 was a better answer. Response? Swap those around.

You get SEO ranking from serving customers well.

Which means your website should be clear about what you provide, so you don't get people arriving thinking you're something you're not. It should be usable on all devices. It should be accessible. It should be fast.

A couple of other human responses are important. Assuming it's for good reasons, all of the signals Google can gather from when people share your website on social media, leave testimonials, comment on your pages, and interact with your materials wherever they are ... all of these are important. Remember also Google can see how your users behave on your site and because their system is AI driven, they can consider all of this information in a much more comprehensive way than we can comprehend. Again, think of Google as God. All seeing.

Let me say this again. For SEO ranking, serve and engage with your customers in an outstanding way.

It's not necessarily speed. I'm not saying you have to answer the phone within 3 rings or you're fired. Elsewhere in this book I encourage you to disappear into the studio for a month or more and to NOT engage with social media and the rest. But I say do it consciously and overtly. Tell everyone what you are doing. The engagement you will get when you come back is worth more than you would get if you just continually grind out incremental art.

The love you will get, also, from living your values .. that gives you an SEO advantage.

Maybe you're thinking "I'm already lovely with customers, what more do you want?"

It's actually a listening challenge. "I do listen". I know, but ... listening is a superpower.

When you interact with a buyer, take a moment afterwards to reflect on what they said and what might be motivating them. Maybe keep a journal. It's not so you can take it all on board and become some sort of artist entertainer, but it informs whether you are getting your message across and also tells you what people are concerned about. And it might be that you create art about the angst of life, the deadening weight of normality and your eternal battle with suicidal thoughts and your buyers are like .. "well, your framing is quite expensive". Buyers can be pretty straightforward and sometimes shockingly external to your world.

Go to Google and search for what you do. Try a few search terms until you get a 'People also ask' section. It worked for me just now for a search on 'landscape painting'. This section is again, machine created, and it's telling you about popular searches .. something you may want to pay attention to.

Click the first one that seems relevant to you. I clicked "what are the 3 concepts of landscape painting" and got the answer "Representational, impressionistic, and abstract are the three main types of landscape art."

So whichever of those you fall into, you might want to check you use the word on your website.

Note that more questions come up when you click. “Who is the best landscape painter?” came up, I clicked it and it said “Vincent Van Gogh”. Alright, do you agree? What’s your opinion on this? Having an opinion is good, it generates interaction (it doesn’t mean we have to descend into insults or populism.)

If your painting style is inspired by van Gogh, Google has shown you an opportunity, say so on your website and maybe you’ll capture a slice of the search traffic from people who are also inspired by him.

Where would you write this (if writing is your mode)? A blog maybe. There are other opportunities though, for instance LinkedIn allows the writing of articles.

Once you’ve decided what you want to say, you might tweet it (max 280 characters at time of writing). So that’s succinct. With a few more words you might post on other social media platforms. Maybe create a video of this short version. Then explain yourself in a longer article that might be your blog post and/or a longer video.

Go searching for online conversations to which you might respectfully, positively and usefully contribute.

A principle of content strategy is that we should always be pointing people to our website. However, social media systems tend to downplay posts containing outbound links, so one way forward is to create the interaction within the platform, and then in your profile have a link to your website for those who want to find out more. Fingers crossed Google can access that and work it all out.

Sounds like hard work, so start small. My goal is that you have just one process that brings you sales, but if it’s not clear from your values sometimes you have to go through doing a lot before you can see what actually works for you. Then you can ditch everything else (cautiously).

Google asks “Is there a landscape artist of the year 2022?” I click, “Elisha Enfield wins Landscape Artist of the Year 2022”. Maybe you have something to say about that.

Now, the other thing about this is not only are the questions chosen by the machine, the answers are too. The answers are snippets from websites. It’s OK to agree/disagree. You might even be chosen as a snippet one day. High times indeed.

To finish this chapter, two more things.

Assuming you are selling your work on your website, be sure you have the phrase “to buy” or “for sale” along with whatever it is you do as a link and page title. Maybe a menu

“landscape art for sale”. You can use the Google Keyword Tool to work out whether that’s better than “landscapes for sale” and so on.

Search phrases can be split into two .. research phrases and buying phrases. There’s a buying process and people start with general thoughts intended to clarify what they want. For those people it’s good if you are helpful and clearly informative. Maybe they’ll remember you when they come to the second stage when they know what they want and are searching for it using the typically longer and more detailed buying phrases such as “Winchester landscapes in oil to buy”.

Which leads me to the second thing. Nouns. Use them and up to the limit of getting spotted doing it, avoid pronouns, especially for your work. Instead of saying “this new work” say “this new large-scale oil painting”.

Go through your website looking for instances like this “It is easy to overlook the beauty around us, but my joyful watercolours reconnect you to nature, leaving space for your imagination to wander. **They** aim to bring a smile and a moment to pause no matter busy your life gets.”

The page, should you know it, does very well on this point, but I’m just programmed to pick up this sort of thing where we could replace that last sentence with something like “A bright watercolour painting can bring a smile .. “. So now we have an additional ‘watercolour painting’ on the page for Google to chew on, rather than ‘they’. Their page also uses ‘painting’ a lot, Google understands that ‘painting’ and ‘watercolour’ and ‘artwork’ are approximates and so it’s OK to get a bit of variety in there and certainly it’s a more interesting read which results in better approval numbers which Google will see.

Check titles especially. There’s the page title right at the top of your browser (outside the page content), but also check your headline and subtitles through your article contain meaningful words from a search point of view, these are given higher weight than the words in paragraphs, but also write headlines and subheads that are interesting and perhaps motivating or even arresting from a human point of view.

Social media

Anyone remember mySpace? FriendsReunited?

Whatever I write here & now (21 Sept 2022) will turn out of date and quaint in the end, but my take at the moment is that Facebook is facing serious competition from TikTok. Facebook’s demise has been a constant rumour forever, I guess it’s too big to fail completely. Microsoft had the same image problems back in the day and turned into a very profitable service provider so maybe it’s here to stay. Update 16/11/22 Musk bought Twitter, fired thousands and is in grave danger of wrecking it completely, or fixing it, who knows?

The other big thing is the world’s realisation of how powerful these platforms are and so political pressure is upon them for everything from stopping nazis to checking young girls are not led into feeling bad about how they look, and the policing of our social media leads to errors, and there’s no-one to talk to when it happens. A dad was concerned about his little

boy's penis, sent a pic on request to his doctor, all his pics were automatically backed up to his Google Photos account, their AI decided it was dodgy, closed his account. Everything, email, all his photographs, logins to services. No recourse.

What I'm saying is, don't put all your energy into building a following on social media because the service you like might slide gently into oblivion, or you might wake up one day with no account. Your email list is yours, no-one can take that away from you. Social media is a great way to find new people and to stay in touch in a light way, but these people are passing through, they might unfollow, they might stay, or they might join your mailing list. Unless they do the latter, they are not massively important to you.

Of course also social media is only useful and interesting to everyone when we populate it with our stuff, which is quite naughty really and one could say it's part of a long history of capitalism exploiting artists.

So where I'm at is a) don't sweat social media, b) advertise on it, for sure, c) only do what's profitable. Also remember opportunity cost. Download the RescueTime app and see how long you spend on social media. I spend about 3 hours a day on it, but I have an excuse .. it's my business, it's what I do, blah de blah. We all have reasons. But what if I limited social media to an hour a day? I'd free up 10 hours a week. The opportunity cost of deciding to spend time on social media is that I don't spend that 10 hours on something else that could be more valuable. For you, it could be your art.

Let's dream a little. If you gave Zuckerberg less of your labour and gained 10 hours a week, 520 hours a year, would your art be more attractive to people in the end? Would your relative quietness be attractive to a gallery who could 'discover' you, rather than you being out megaphoning all day?

I don't know, these questions are for you to answer for yourself.

"Here lies John Allsopp, he spent a lot of time on Facebook" .. my gravestone if I'm not careful.

What I do know as a marketer and persuader is we are awash with memes and beliefs about how things are and they are placed there by people who want something from us. Trickle down economics anyone? Artists are free, that's the point. Let's do our own thing. Maybe you don't have to post every day, maybe someone just told us that because they want us to post every day. And even if it's true because they wrangled the algorithm so it's true, we're still being played. If our engagement scores are low because we haven't done things exactly right .. personally I'd rather walk away. Patti Smith would tell them to shove it. Kate Bush too. And P J Harvey. Maggi Hambling definitely.

What do your values tell you to do?

LinkedIn is alright tho. And Reddit if you want to find a community of your sort of people.

Google Analytics and Google Search Console

These two free tools can help you improve your website and discover what people want (just in case you would like to provide it).

It's quite likely Google Analytics is already installed on your website. It tells you useful information about what happens when someone visits. It can tell you where they came from, how long they stay, which pages they visit and so on. The key metrics are:

- Traffic: are you getting more website visitors than, for example, you got last year?
- Bounce rate: the percentage of people who arrive and leave without interacting. It's imperfect, this, because that visitor may arrive, read your whole page, be satisfied, but they'll be registered as a bounce, which we typically think of as a bad thing, but maybe they instantly got everything they wanted and have a fabulous impression of you.
- Time on site: also open to interpretation .. did they spend a lot of time because they think you are fabulous and were having a great time, or was it because they were frustrated as hell trying to find what they wanted through your slow website and confusing navigation?
- Proportion of new visitors versus previous visitors: again, depends what you want but for traffic measurement I usually record 'new visitors'. Ideally then some of those will come back, but you have to design that in and give them a reason to come back, so perhaps the prompt is a social media post or a mailing list email.
- Goals: you have to actively set these up. An example goal might be if someone signs up to your mailing list or buys something or spends more than a minute on your site or looks at more than 4 pages. Once you've defined a goal, you can see what percentage of traffic hits your goal from, say, different sources. What is the conversion rate of traffic from different sources (social media, advertising, search engines) and does that guide you about how to improve your communications?

The other software is Google Search Console. This is all about what happens in Google search.

A search results page shows maybe 10 results. Search Console will count an impression (that is, you got displayed) even if you actually didn't, if you were on page 9 of that search result and the user never clicked that far. That's a good thing because if you are on page 7 for some important (to you) search term, and you do some work and after a few weeks you're on page 5, that's good to know. But don't get too excited about your total number of impressions. Comparing this year to last year is worthwhile, but the total number doesn't mean much on its own.

Search console will show you your position in search, so if you are position 17, that means you're position 7 on page 2.

It also shows you clicks. Now that's meaningful, how many people saw you in their search results and clicked through to your website.

The highest clickthrough percentages will likely be for your name or brand, and that's cool. Google likes that, if real people are searching for your name, that's a big signal that tells Google that you matter, out here in meatworld. That is always assuming you weren't named Elvis Presley, then you'd get a lot of bounces. "No I'm not Elvis Presley, I'm Elvis Brian Presley, dammit!"

This is all in the 'performance' section of Search Console. If you're relatively relaxed about SEO and happy to just pootle upwards with it, I would make a note to check your results here once a month and once you're happy everything seems normal, do two things.

1. Sort your results by position, starting with 1 at the top. Scroll down until you reach the first result on page two that has decent traffic, so it has position 11 or higher and there's some traffic to it. If you have multiple pages, click on the query and choose the 'pages' tab. OK, what can you do with that page to make Google think you are worth a page 1 position for the search term you just identified? Go make that change.
2. Sort your results by impressions. If you have high impressions for something irrelevant, try to remove things from your website that are causing it or Google will think you're a poor place to send traffic. If you find a high impressions phrase that you'd love to be higher for, see if you can incorporate it naturally into your site somewhere.

Search console also gives you a few hygiene reports, just check those in case you've been hacked or are not appearing properly on mobile devices.

Ideally using these two free tools you can get found for something you can deliver upon (and ultimately get paid for).

Remember that most of the time people online are searching for answers, they are goal seeking. That's a different frame of mind from say, browsing a catalogue. Try to give them what they want while also wearing the perfume of your value set. If a competitive, professional mountain biker is looking for a picture of a particularly tough corner on a track in a forest, and they happen upon your painting showing the effort and adrenalin of a previous competitor at exactly that corner, they may connect with you because of your shared admiration of effort and determination. That's where business comes from. (For that to happen, by the way, your image tags are going to have to be pretty well thought out.)

Be you

(you know why)

Show us the way

Isn't it amazing what humankind has achieved? Science and engineering, medicine and capitalism. Truly.

I can't remember who said it, but there was the idea that if Christopher Columbus had taken an artist with him when he sailed to 'discover' America, we'd know a whole lot more about the people he found there.

So many people are stuck feeling unfulfilled, being told what to do in a job or relationship or situation you don't want anymore.

Art is our way out and our way forward. It's how we understand what it is to be human. It helps our dreams form.

I'm not asking you to solve world hunger. I'm not burdening you with all the big issues. It can just be that someone asks you to paint their dog and you do and you spot something they never saw. You showed them that there's more. It can light a spark in a way that a dead visit to a fast food chain never will (although you can't eat a painting so I guess they have their place too).

We are routinely constrained, but in your role as artist you don't have to be. You can escape, and you can show us what it's like.

One of the tools used by people in power is to influence us to think everything's fine. After all, the way it is has been good to them so they see no reason to change. "Well what's the alternative to capitalism, eh?" "Well err." "You see, you can't, there isn't, there never will be, it's great, nothing else will do, no, no, no, no."

So I don't like it when artists time-and-motion themselves a price for a piece of art. It's a method the factory owner uses to control us, and we're bigger and better than that.

Artists are the beacon.

Purely by existing, by spending your time making art and by surviving at it, you're showing that there is another way. Outside of the morning alarm, the commute, the pay packet, the rent.

Just simply that you're an artist, that's half of it.

The other half is that you're you.

Now, maybe you're a punk artist, but you've still got to shower and eat and give your kids their best chance and be a family and have clean bedlinen. So the punk bit, that's just a part of you.

Your artistic self is where you are most free to be yourself.

And through that, through accepting yourself, you shine a light for others. Whatever ailment you battle, whatever's happened to you in the past that got you here, whatever you're going through or struggling with now, you drop glowing beads along a path for others to follow.

You can't do that from behind the counter at Argos.

You possibly can't even do that with your family, your kids, your friends.

Just, uniquely, here. As an artist.

And I'm not saying you have to be angst-ridden and traumatised. You can be a happy, well balanced artist. You could be an amazing artist with a deadeningly boring personality. Whatever, you shine a light just by being.

However. Self indulgence is a turn-off. The antidote to self-indulgence is being useful. Being aware of what the world needs and how you can help.

I cycled to a commune to understand that lifestyle one summer in my youth and one evening after other visitors had gone to bed they asked me what I wanted to do and I said I might just hang around on benefits for a bit. And they gently destroyed me. Because .. we have an obligation to contribute to society. That was the big lesson of communal living. So equally, you don't get to have us pay for your art while you mess about. Your art exists to change lives, to mean something. That's the value that you contribute, and it's realised when you get paid.

So your artistic life carries a message, and as you work with me you will have crafted that so that it affects people. Your message has two parts, you and your audience. It's what you want to say, and what people want to hear. These two gears have to mesh for you to sell your art.

So the whole point of values-based artist marketing is this.

Realise what you stand for and where you can make a difference.

Stand for it.

Others will be inspired.

And together we'll change the world.

(While also attending to the laundry.)

So be you, but be an aware you. Aware of yourself and the values you hold high. And aware of the world you inhabit and what your contribution can be. Do the laundry. Then grab your tools, live your message with passion and let's press this home.

Success doesn't lead to happiness. Happiness leads to success

Much of this is chapter is from Jeff Sutherland's book [SCRUM: The art of doing twice the work in half the time](#) (that's an affiliate link btw, I probably get 1p if you happen to buy it from a billionaire).

What makes you happy? Autonomy, mastery and purpose. Well, you have autonomy and you'll always be working on mastery. Values-based marketing gives you the purpose. It tells you where you fit in the world.

Happiness is not complacency. Happiness is, you really wanna do this. It's positive, active engagement.

I'll adapt something he suggests (it all goes back to Deming and quality control). How about, on a Friday night or Sunday night or whenever is best for you, you ask yourself three questions.

1. On a scale of 1-5, how do you feel about what you're doing
2. Why?
3. What one thing would make you happier in the next period?

You could do this every day, so then 'period' means day. I'm suggesting weekly because I'm not massive on spending most of every day changing stuff when you're also the producer and the bookkeeper, stock control, phone answerer and sales person and anyway it's too quick a cycle to know what's worked. But, as you wish. If you have good times and poor ones it could be daily when you're on, then pause during the times you are off (apologies if that's a simplistic view, I've no experience with mental ups and downs, I'm like an oil tanker. I just wanted to say .. adapt it for yourself, but if you drop off the habit one day for some reason, have a way to get back on).

Could even be monthly if you're busy, and the '3' item would be a bit more substantial.

The other thing I would want at my side when I answer these questions is my values map, because it's a source of ideas for question 3. If you're going to live by your values, and if you're going to make a change, then that change should get you closer to living by your values.

So you know what, that second paragraph has given me a bit of a wow.

Almost no-one has autonomy. That's the beautiful fountain of being an artist. You absolutely have that.

Every artist is working on their own development, that's normal, it's part of the exploration and trying new things and so on. No-one's stopping you so you have that too.

And you may have purpose, but you're here reading a book about values-based marketing so you must at least see that it's worth getting more clarity about what you stand for and through that, understand more certainly where you're going.

So there, you go. Values-based marketing is the key to happiness, and happiness is the key to success.

Amazing. Can't wait to hear what you do with this.

Don't multiply, simplify

Remember that the ultimate goal here is to build a single marketing method that delivers all the art sales you want.

A single method is easy to understand and maintain. You can run split tests to see if an improvement is really an improvement.

That's a standard marketing technique built in to many of the systems we tend to use .. WordPress, Mailchimp, Analytics and so on. The basic idea is .. if you want to make a change to a page you can test your new, improved page against the original and see if it is, indeed, better. If so, ditch the old page, if not, you live and learn and can return to the original :-)

One way to tell whether you have a compliant prospect or a pain in the bum is to ask them to do something, for example "follow me on LinkedIn". If they do, great. If not, they're not going to read stuff, they're going to misunderstand, kick off about the guarantee and so on.

So if a prospect has to follow one route to you, and they do, they're hot prospects. Everyone else, whatever, if they don't respect your boundaries .. my feeling is, great, your new sales funnel filters out time wasters.

If you're not everywhere, there's a greater sense of scarcity and discovery and that's motivating. Plus, we want you to be doing your art, not faffing on every social media platform.

If you control the route to you, it puts you in control. Also good.

I suggest you need a few key parts to your process:

- a way to attract new people and get them to request connection, perhaps a social media follow or a sign up to your mailing list,
- your routine for communicating with these people to build familiarity and trust, with ultimately a way to get them to take action (come to your exhibition or buy something),
- and then some additional connection for buyers with the aim of turning them into repeat buyers or advocates for you.

If you want something relatively hands-off, the new people process might be ads, and your mailing list process might just be publicising your next exhibition as part of the Rockstar Lifecycle. Then I've suggested elsewhere in this book the annual buyer-gathering party.

Overall, the big idea is to get to the point where that's all you need to do, just those three things, and you can ditch all your other marketing.

But a note of caution. Do this gradually and with your eyes wide open to the consequences. If you are selling at the moment, try not to wreck your existing pipeline. I favour evolutionary change, not revolutionary change unless you have plenty of fiscal cushion to get you through.

I suggest taking something from this book and implementing it in addition to what you're doing. If it feels right, what do you feel you could stop doing? Maybe ditch two things for every one you add. Most people are doing too much, simplification helps you focus. And repeat.

Let's say you do switch on ads to reach new people, and previously you've been spending time in social media. Do both for now, and see if you can see the difference. If sale rise, then maybe the ads are working, so you can cut down on social media time. Now .. some people may notice and you may get pushback. That doesn't mean you should pander to them. You're providing free content after all. And perhaps the people from ads are better targeted. Don't be put off if you feel some resistance to change.

Just take it steady. But remember the goal is a single, simple, repeatable process that easily delivers all the sales you want.

Leadership

Leaders are charismatic, strong, alpha types.

Nope.

The idea of what makes a leader is changing and .. you can lead.

Why would you want to?

Leaders have followers.

We started on this journey together by identifying your core values. I encouraged you to live more overtly by your values and suggested ways you could find others who share your values.

Leadership is what we've been talking about all along.

The first task of a leader is to define the group of people they 'lead'. That's clarified partly by your chosen values. So if you stand for kindness, then you seek others who stand for kindness and then your group of people are all into kindness. From your group, you'll discover likeminds you can work and collaborate with.

Values-led marketing encourages you to be more bold in living by your values. When you do that, you'll be in a position among the group of people who value 'kindness', as someone who does kindness more than most. That puts you ahead.

As an artist you have no boss, no rules to stick to, you have more freedom than most to push further, to break down barriers and test limits.

It means others who maybe are looking for ways to be more kind, they are looking around for ideas and you are pushing ahead, you are further along the path, you are showing the way. You're an inspiration, a leader.

You don't need big speeches or a powerful personality. You just need to be ahead of a group (which you define) in the thing you all admire.

If someone wants to be more kind and wants others to think of them as being kind, they will see your social media posts and they could share them as a shorthand way of saying to their friends "look, kindness is cool, I like it, I'm a kind person".

The more people share your posts, the greater your reach in social media. Of course, kind people hang around with kind people so you end up naturally networking and automatically discovering likeminded people.

The opposite is true also. You get to define who you are not. Sadly, human nature seems to want an enemy, an outgroup. Your people are into kindness, therefore the people you are against are maybe deliberately cruel or maybe only careless about their fellows, your point being that it's not enough to just pootle through life, we should make an effort to be kind. When you define your in-group, you also define your out-group.

There's more about you that makes you a natural leader.

You have vision. I read a study a few years back where people graded their ability to bring to mind an image between 1 and 10 and it turns out there are some people who thought the "mind's eye" was just a figure of speech. They don't have it, they can't make up an image in their head. At the other extreme are people (who perhaps are more likely to become artists) who can imagine a scene in full colour, motion, all the senses, realer than real. Most people are inbetween, somewhat able to imagine something but it's hard work and isn't fully clear, more of an impression than a bright and clear vision.

Not only are you free to push ahead, so you are further along the path than most in the life you've chosen and we are back to the stepping stones idea again, you can see the possibilities further ahead.

But using your superpower ability to visualise, you can imagine what a future would look like with more of your value in it. What would life be like if everyone was kinder? We can come up with stats and figures, but maybe you can imagine a scene where someone is rescued from the sea by a volunteer, or someone homeless is helped or all the homeless people are helped and not only can you imagine it, you can create an image, you have the skills to 'print out' what's in your imagination.

For others who can't even imagine it, who aren't that far ahead, that's a service. It's useful. It could be galvanising. It could be magical.

So let's summarise. You're ahead of a group of people who share your values, you have the skills to help them visualise a common purpose and you're heading there anyway if anyone wants to follow.

You're a leader.

People are watching you for inspiration.

Need more help?

Here's a bunch of ways I can help you implement values-based artist marketing. Prices here are correct at the time of writing (21/12/22) but are obviously subject to change.

You can join my mailing list here <https://artistseo.blog/contact-me/> for free.

Every now and then I'll run a free 5-day challenge (you'll hear about it if you are on my mailing list). I'll run through the core elements of values-based artist marketing and then there's a special offer for more support to put the system into action if you need it.

You could join my Continuous Website Improvement Club (CWIC) where we have a Zoom call twice a year so I can review your main website stats, compare them to other artists and we work out how you can turn your website into a beacon that calls serious buyers to you. At the time of writing this is £97/year and you can find out more and sign up here <https://artistseo.blog/get-website-improvement-peace-of-mind-sell-more-art-be-more-artist/>

If you want to get into galleries, I have an unusual system for that, check this out <https://artistseo.blog/groups/group-galleries-am/>

If you feel like you need one-to-one help implementing all this, I also offer coaching (subject to availability). The first session is free and you can book yourself in here <https://calendly.com/john-allsopp/initial-coaching-consultation-free>

About the author



I have an unusual mixture of skills; a lifetime of ethical marketing experience, a first class degree in Internet computing, and a forever interest in the arts. Having adolcesced to punk, I'm independent and dedicated to changing the world through art. However, I can't draw for toffee so, instead, I help people who can.

Watch how the following works: Note what you think about me, and then compare to what you think about me when I tell you where I'm from. Location and background are where we start to build a mental model of someone.

I was born in 1961 and grew up in Long Eaton, between Nottingham and Derby. It's a small industrial town with lots of small industry. If you balance the UK on a pin, that's where it is. My mum became a teacher, my dad worked in industry (at Stanton before they closed it, then at the power station), I have a younger sister. (See how your model of me changed?)

I was always at the top table at school for the core skills and science, not so much for languages, sport (I used to bunk off sport, get on the bus and go to Nottingham library), or art. I was academic until punk happened during my A levels.

Professionally, I joined a PR company, started my own PR/direct marketing company, then got into digital marketing and web development. I've been a freelance consultant since the late nineties.